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Designed to acquaint parents with how modern languages are being taught in the schools today, this booklet discusses audiolingual aims and methods and explains the role of electronic equipment, visual aids, and modern textbooks in language instruction. A concluding section advises parents on how to encourage and guide their child's study of a second language, and a brief bibliography and a short film list are included for further reference. (AF)

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Modern Foreign Languages and Your Child

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
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FL 000 760

OE-27020

Modern Foreign Languages and Your Child

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Courtesy City Park Primary School, Dalton, Ga.

Now sing along with us in French! "Ouvre moi ta porte, mon ami Pierrot."

Introduction

A rather perplexing phenomenon in American education took place in the 1930's and 1940's. While the need for persons who could speak a foreign language was increasing at an alarming rate, the percentage of students studying languages was declining steadily, and of this reduced number a great many were learning only to read the language.

In the early 1950's there was a general awakening to the fact that in modern language study the United States had sunk to the status of an underdeveloped nation. The first action taken by the Federal Government was to set up stricter language requirements for its own employees who were to represent us abroad. The Army specialized training program of World War II, the Army Language School, the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State, the U.S. Information Agency, and several other governmental programs as well as the foreign language program of the Modern Language Association and other professional efforts paved the way for the language provisions of the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This act, through titles VI and III, included comprehensive measures to foster the study of modern foreign languages and modernize the methods of instruction.

At the school level the act (title III) provides funds which the States or local schools may match dollar for dollar to enable elementary and secondary schools to acquire laboratory and other special equipment and materials needed to strengthen modern foreign language instruction. By the end of the sixth year of NDEA some 7,500 high schools had installed laboratories with the help of these funds, and a far greater number had acquired other equipment and materials such as tape recorders and tapes, record players and discs, projectors, films and filmstrips, reference books, and other language learning aids.

In addition, title III of the act provides funds to enable State departments of education to employ foreign language specialists to help local schools initiate good instructional programs and to conduct workshops for the demonstration of new methods and materials. Prior to 1958 only 3 States had foreign language consultants on the staff of the State department of public instruction; 42 States employed such specialists by the fall of 1964.

To train elementary and secondary teachers in the new teaching methods and the use of the new equipment, title VI of the act authorizes funds for institutes conducted by colleges and universities under contract with the U.S. Office of Education. Here teachers of the more commonly taught foreign languages practice the oral language intensively, study the principles of linguistic science, learn more about the foreign culture, and gain familiarity with audioverbal teaching techniques. Some of these institutes are held abroad.

Title VI of NDEA also makes substantial provision for the development of the languages long neglected in our schools. In late 1958 the U.S. Commissioner of Education contracted with the American Council of Learned Societies for an assessment of language needs in Government, business, industry, and education. As a result of the Council's findings 6 languages—Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian—were designated for primary emphasis; 18 languages were recommended for secondary emphasis; 60 other languages or language groups were designated as also critical for the national need. In 1961 the Commissioner of Education added the languages of Latin America to the "critical" lists. For many of the neglected languages, texts, grammars, readers, dictionaries, recordings, and other basic teaching materials are

being developed for the first time through the NDEA program of research and development, and college instruction in these languages is being established in Government-sponsored language and area centers. Although so far most of the effort to increase the study of non-European languages has been concentrated at the graduate level, in the summer of 1964 the Office of Education made awards to 196 undergraduate college students for intensive study of 15 critical modern foreign languages.

Three other programs of the National Defense Education Act, although designating no subject fields, are helping to further modern foreign language development. Under the student loan program (title II) special consideration is given applicants who possess superior academic background, and under the graduate fellowship program (title IV) foreign language, including the common languages, is one of the fields in which awards are made. Title VII supports research in the educational use of motion pictures, television, radio, recordings, teaching machines, and other new media. An example of such experimentation is the foreign language project at the University of Illinois for the development of materials and methods to facilitate foreign language instruction in elementary schools.

All this is having increasing effect on the teaching and study of modern foreign languages in this country and is helping to prepare our citizens to live in a world where the first successful steps have already been taken in the establishment of global television and where trips to seemingly far-distant places can be taken almost as casually as a trip to another State.

Modern Foreign Languages and Your Child has been prepared to acquaint parents with the improvements being made in school programs of modern foreign language and to answer some of their questions about how to encourage and guide their children's language study. It is of the utmost importance that the home and the school work together to create and maintain favorable learning conditions.

Languages for Communication

The chances are that 10, 20, or 30 years ago you who are reading this page today were one of the great majority of young Americans who never elected to study a modern foreign language in high school. If you were one of the small minority who did study a foreign language, you probably did not start your language learning until you were 14 or 15 years old and so missed by almost 10 years the easiest age for starting to speak a new language.

You almost certainly studied the modern language from textbooks patterned after those used for Latin, and no doubt you remember your struggles with grammar, vocabulary lists, and the translation of such sentences as "Je n'ai pas un livre, mais la plume de ma tante est sur la table." Very probably you continued your study for only 2 years and emerged from the experience with almost no capacity to speak the language or to understand it when you heard it spoken. Unless you intended to become a teacher or one of the small band of professional interpreters and translators, you may have thought that foreign language study had little bearing on the life you would lead and the living you would have to earn.

But languages are not taught as they were when you were in school, as you know if your child keeps reporting his activities in the language lab.

The New Aims and the New Methods in Modern Foreign Languages

A foreign language is not "just like English except for the words," as those who have never studied a second language are likely to assume. Each language has its own particular structure, sound system, and special characteristics of form and expression. For each has evolved under different circumstances and is used by people with different ways of living and thinking and with different associations of background and experience.

Foreign language instruction now tends to follow the natural way you and your child learned to speak your own native language. You habitually heard English spoken before you tried to speak it yourself. You picked up the sound and inflections by ear, attached meaning to them through the situation you were in, and tried to utter the same sounds yourself. Gradually you gained mastery of words, phrases, and sentence patterns by hearing and saying them over and over again until you could use them without conscious effort.

Adapted to school conditions, this way of learning leads the child to understand and speak without effort a certain amount of useful conversational material in the new language before he attempts to read and write it. This method has come to be known variously as the aural-oral, the audiolingual, or the audioverbal approach to language learning.

But the emphasis on the heard and spoken word is not limited to the early stages of language learning; constant practice in these skills is continued throughout the student's language study. For the overriding aim is the development of the capacity to communicate with people who speak the language. At the heart of the new method is the idea of language as something to be used, not merely studied as a school subject. Your youngster is first of all going to learn to speak and understand French, German, Spanish, or whatever language he chooses. Later on he will learn to read it extensively, probably with greater facility than you achieved in your high school study of the language; and he will read with direct comprehension and without mental translation into English. Someday, if he continues his work under the new programs, he will read French newspapers and the works of great French writers, and French history and biography, all in the original lan-

groups; and he will be able to talk in French about what he has read. The secret is regular and frequent practice with good models in a carefully designed sequence of interesting and appropriate text materials.

In the two sections that follow you will find descriptions and illustrations of audiovisual learning in action and see how the student is led to listen, imitate, and recognize the meaning of sentences displaying the essential language patterns directly and without continually translating them into English.

French is not French without French manners. "Au revoir!"

Courtesy of Dubie School, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Courtesy Forest Hills School (10), Queens, N.Y.

After much practice students converse in Russian.

Basic Learning—A Day in Class

Learning to understand and speak a foreign language is basically the acquisition of skills, in much the same way as learning to ride a bicycle or to play baseball or the French horn. The acquisition of new skills means forming new habits; before anyone can speak a foreign language with fluency, he has to acquire a new set of language habits. Some of the ways in which your child can acquire these new language habits are shown in this section.

The teacher uses a carefully chosen text containing basic dialogs about ordinary everyday situations that will appeal to the learner. The sentences in these dialogs present the basic speech patterns that are used most frequently in the new language. The pupil practices these sentences over and over again until he can say them almost automatically. Then the teacher leads him to apply these basic patterns to other situations. Through this process of guided practice, variation, and adaptation, power of self-expression in the new language is gradually developed.

The new language is learned in easy steps.
First the ear is trained.
The teacher says the foreign sentences and makes clear the meaning.

The pupils hear the same sentences spoken by the recorded voices of various native speakers.

By acting out the parts to be learned the teacher makes sure that the pupils understand the meaning of the sentences.

Next the basic sentences are repeated many times.
First the whole class speaks them in chorus.

Then one-half of the class speaks to the other half.

Then one row speaks to another.

Then one pupil speaks to another.

Practice is continued in the language laboratory.

Or at home with records.

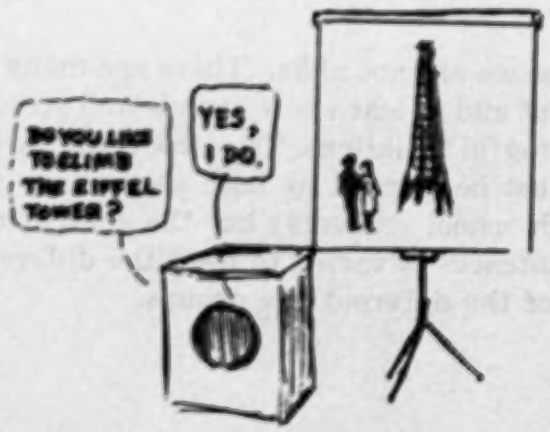
The sentences are repeated until the pupil can say them automatically.
Then he learns to vary the sentences for use in many different contexts.

Next he learns to combine the sentences with others in new conversations.

All classes are not alike. There are many ways to present and to learn new sounds and structures in meaningful situations. The same sentence structures must be learned by both elementary school and high school students; but the content of the basic sentences is varied to meet the different interests of the different age groups.

Puppets often have conversations.

Sound films taken in t[illegible]oreign country are sometimes used to present the basic sentence patterns.

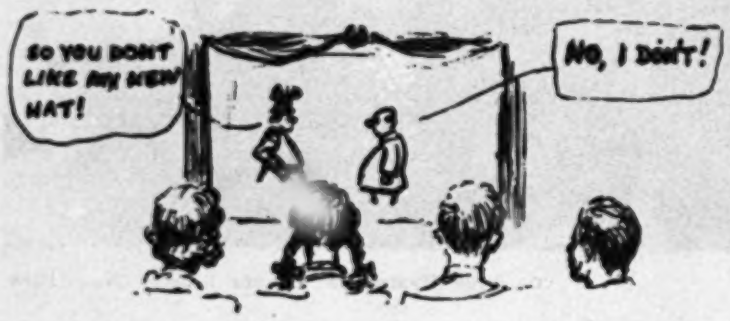


Basic sentences may be sung.

Or used in games.

Or incorporated in telephone conversations.

All in all, the foreign language class at any level is lively and dramatic.



After the pupil has had much practice in learning to understand what he hears and in speaking, he is introduced to reading. Here he uses the same materials that he has already learned orally.

After that the pupil goes on to write the same materials.

The teacher uses oral tests to check the pupil's proficiency in listening to the new language and in speaking it.

* * * * * * * *

In these illustrations of basic learning steps, the key idea is practice by repetition. But we have so far made only slight mention of the teacher's and the student's valuable new ally—the machine.

Courtesy Westchester County Schools, New York

A young student is fascinated as she hears the accent of a native speaker.

The "Talking Machine" and the Teacher

Try repeating five times in English, "Where are you going?" Now pretend that the person you are speaking to doesn't understand, and repeat the same question five more times. Did you pronounce each word exactly the same each time? Did your intonation vary? Did you get bored? Did your voice get tired? Now repeat the question 10 more times. This little exercise illustrates the kind of repetitive drill which is essential to the formation of new language habits, and it suggests the value of having a machine take over part of the teacher's work of modeling the practice materials.

The playback machine will patiently and faithfully repeat each sound, word, phrase, or sentence for as long as you wish. It acts at the teacher's bidding and, if supplied with effective recorded materials, extends the guided practice initiated by the teacher. Not only is it tireless, but it can furnish a variety of voices and accustom the learner to the way different people talk. The voices it plays back can all be those of native speakers of the language.

In the beginning stage the machine is used for listening only, to help the student in learning to understand thoroughly what he is going to imi-

Courtesy Jefferson Junior High School, Albuquerque, N. Mex.

In an electronic classroom all students have equal opportunity for individual listening and speaking practice.

into. The preliminary experience of hearing speech until the patterns 'sound right' is essential for accurate imitation and for quick comprehension of meaning.

In the next stage, after the student has come to understand the material presented, the machine gives him an accurate model for imitation and practice. Conversations and drills of many types can be recorded; and so also can the tests which measure proficiency in listening and speaking. The practice material is recorded on tapes or on tele-loops (phonograph discs, with pauses between the items to give the student time to repeat a phrase or sentence immediately following the model or to respond to a question or statement. Then a light comes on to give the correct answer so that the student can hear at once whether he gave the right response. In many recordings another pause allows the student to repeat his correct response. As he advances, he listens to selected recordings of informal and literature as well as of poetry, drama, and essays. Later he may hear other types of recordings or listen to radio broadcasts ranging from newscasts, roundtable discussions, and speeches by leaders of the foreign country to variety shows, advertisements, and skits.

The machine in language learning may be only a single record player or tape recorder used in an ordinary classroom. Or it may be an entire installation of equipment housed either in the classroom or in a separate laboratory, that is, a fully equipped library-type room away from the classroom. A complete installation includes a central control station (console) for the teacher and work stations or individual booths for the students. Listening practice can be provided by the single record player or tape playback machine; but the electronic classroom and the laboratory offer far more than listening practice.

In the electronic classroom the student may have at his desk several kinds of equipment, such as earphones (sometimes 'activated' to enable him to hear himself as he speaks into a microphone) and recording apparatus. The teacher will probably direct the practice from a console, and as students speak into their microphones she can 'tune' them in, one by one, and give individual help without interrupting the practice of the rest of the class. If there is an intercommuni-

SPAI

ration system or if the students do not have individual microphones, the teacher moves from pupil to pupil to monitor their oral practice and correct their pronunciation. This constant correction is essential until the student learns to distinguish the differences in sounds and intonation and then match his own errors. In his first exposure to foreign sounds, a student's recording of his own voice can be, *with the help of the teacher*, an effective means of immediate correction and reinforcement.

If there is a complete language laboratory, a more flexible program can be offered since the laboratory usually has all the equipment of the electronic classroom and can be scheduled for any outside of class time. The student's work station or booth is made more quiet and isolated by the use of soundproof materials. The teacher's console may have several tape decks supplied with a variety of taped programs to take care of individual differences in rate of learning. Some students may be working on lesson 3, others on lesson 4, while those who are far ahead of the rest of the class may be engaged in supplementary work. The language laboratory normally has recording facilities at some booths and sometimes it has them at every student position. With such equipment the student may record both the model voice from the tape and his own response; then by playing back the tape, he can hear how his pronunciation and response compare with the recorded model. The language laboratory is also used for periodic tests. In oral tests, the student hears the question live, or via his microphone if it is taped, and records his answer via his microphone on a tape which the teacher later listens to, grades, and reviews with the student. In written tests, the student may be required to listen to the question on tape and write his answers on an answer sheet.

A laboratory or some electronic equipment is so helpful to effective language learning as is a science laboratory to science learning. In both subjects, in order to learn, the student must himself perform rather than just hear or watch someone else perform. Moreover with these electronic aids the student can speak to the foreign language for an entire class period—a far cry from the old classroom where each student took his turn with 30 or 40 others! And if his classroom teacher's accent is not native, the student can still acquire a native accent since he has within easy reach a

variety of recorded native speakers to use as his models. But all the opportunities afforded by the laboratory or electronic classroom will fail to lead to correct and fluent use of the foreign language unless the student makes frequent and regular use of them.

Courtesy Southern State University, Edgar Institute.

Slow learning aids—The class with not a tape recorder.

Books—There Have Been Changes

If your child is beginning French in high school and you are considering going through those dusty boxes in the attic to find the French textbook that you used in high school, DON'T. In your own French class you probably talked in English about rules of grammar and learned so much about French that you never had time for enough practice in speaking it. Times have changed, and your French textbook is out of date. There are new materials. And they come in big packages. There are teachers' manuals, a variety of audiovisual aids, and student texts, all designed to help the student understand and speak from the first day he is in class and later to read and write what he has learned to understand and speak.

When you examine your child's text, don't be alarmed if the vocabulary lists, verb conjugations, pronoun classifications, and rules of usage you had in yours seem to be either missing or placed in some inconspicuous place for reference only. Actually they are all there, but in their proper place in context and carefully arranged so that nothing is left to chance. You can verify the systematic introduction and repetition of forms if you follow a sentence pattern as it appears first in one of the sentences of the basic dialog, then

is a question-and-answer practice, then in other drills, and again in new combinations for further conversational practice. The teacher's manual contains suggested activities that will require still further use of the sentences (for instance, in games or songs) and more adaptations of it in new dialogs.

These new books may have hard covers or they may come in looseleaf sections which the student can receive one at a time and so master the content of each section before going on to the next. The basic content of the new books, whatever their form, is functional material aimed at developing good speech habits in the new language. Later the student may have a workbook for writing and will learn to read; but at first he reads only materials that he has learned as speech, just as he did when he learned to read English. At home he may practice with records made by native speakers of the language, or he may stay after school for some extra work in the language laboratory.

The teacher's package contains many different types of items and suggestions to make the class period more varied without introducing new content. These items may be films, filmstrips, slides,

Courtesy Fairmont High School, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Students learn to talk to each other. "Wer bezahlt das Fenster?" (Who is going to pay for the window?)

or large pictures to serve as cues in drills, to stimulate conversation, or to transport the class to France (or Germany or Mexico or the Soviet Union, as the case may be). Some classroom doors are hung with signs reading, for example, "Come to France for an hour." A student may even learn his grammar through pictures representing the structures in the foreign language that differ from English structures. For example, in English "the paper is folded" could mean either that the paper is a folded paper or that it is in the process of being folded. In French, the same expression cannot represent both ideas; two sentences are needed. Pictures show this difference immediately

and eliminate the need for a verbal explanation in English.

The whole language course might even be on films made in the foreign country; the spoken and written drills would then be derived from the text of the films. Such courses are sometimes called film-texts, since no textbook is used apart from the films.

Each new textbook your child will use is designed to increase his proficiency in the language and is built firmly upon the preceding textbook. Every vocabulary item and sentence structure which he has already learned is included and used again in combination with the new items and patterns that need to be learned. As he continues his study over the longer sequence, more emphasis is placed on reading and writing. But the emphasis on proficiency in understanding the spoken word and in speaking is continuous throughout.

So on that trip to the attic don't bring down your old French textbook. But do bring out the record player.

Courtesy Houston (Tex.) Public Schools.

Students learn to use verbs with action pictures.

Courtesy Language Institute, Colgate University

Basic sentences can be learned from slides.

Courtesy El Rodeo School, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Language learning is realistic in the first grade. "¡Ay! ¡doctor!"

It Takes Time

If your child comes home from his elementary school some afternoon and announces, perhaps half in jest, that he will be interpreter for the family, give him every encouragement—but don't expect too much too soon. His teacher could well remind you: "It's not that I don't work hard, but by the end of the year I will have had only 60 hours to talk to Johnny in French, and that's less than a week. And, remember, it took you 5 or 6 years to teach him English!"

Very likely Johnny will be able to interpret creditably and speak with a near-native accent if he continues studying the language long enough. But how long is long enough? The Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State has established, through experience with adults studying in intensive programs, the average time required for functional mastery of a foreign language.

Language	*Scheduled hours* [1]
French	600
German	600
Italian	600
Russian	1,100
Spanish	600

[1] Plus home study ranging from 15 to 24 hours weekly.

Cleveland Elementary School, Washington, D.C.

Spanish words indicate that at least three people in this class know how to say "It's half past three" in Spanish.

Johnny is now in the third grade and receives 30 minutes of French instruction daily. If he continues through the sixth grade with the same amount of instruction that he is now receiving, in three years he will have some 540 contact hours of French. He has, of course, an advantage over the adult learners under the Government programs mentioned above in that he imitates speech sounds more easily and has a natural readiness to try out the foreign sounds without inhibition. On the other hand, his class is larger than the adult classes, and he may or may not, depending on his motivation, practice much at home.

If Johnny continues his progress in high school from grades 7 through 12, he will attend the French class for about 180 hours each year and will thus be a bad, from the start in the third grade to the end of his senior year in high school, a total of 1,260 hours of instruction. By that time he should have a good working control of the language. His high school courses will have involved him in reading and writing and will have continued his classroom and practice in the language laboratory as with homework does.

If Johnny's older brother who did not begin French until he entered the 8th grade continues through the 12th grade, he will have had 600 hours of instruction. He too should acquire a working knowledge of French, but he will speak with less fluency than Johnny and will not feel so much at home with the language.

The length of study is indeed important. But so given number of hours spent in class will of itself insure mastery of a language. The time must be well spent, with good materials and techniques that provide for individual practice and evoke the kind of motivation that will lead the student to practice outside of class. The cost of the number of practice hours needed would be prohibitive if they were all to be put in in the presence of a teacher. Therefore practice at home and in the laboratory must be planned and encouraged. Language learning is the development of skills, and as in learning to play the piano, no proficiency can be acquired without practice. And this practice must be frequent, regular, and of the right kind. Mastery of a language does not come with one effort.

How Parents Can Help

Illustration for Alice's Adventures Underground, showing Alice, Rabbit, and Bill

Alice presents to the Knight, Haigha and Hatter the three gardeners, "Who are asleep, under Fig-ure!"

foreign language. It might even be fun to enroll in a foreign language class yourself or make a family project of taking one of the language courses recorded on discs which are now commercially available. Or you might follow a language program on television.

Checklist for Parents

In the home:

1. Show fun ways the family enjoys a foreign language and develop an ongoing talk about events from the foreign country.
2. Select gifts that have some educational value for the acquisition of the foreign language, for example, records, art objects, handicrafts, books, or travel guides.
3. If you have a child of the foreign language, have a meaningful conversation in the foreign language at least once each week.
4. Occasionally invite foreign visitors and exchange students or teachers to your home and plan for your children to talk to the visitors.
5. Subscribe to at least one interesting magazine or newspaper from the country of most interest to your foreign-language-minded son or daughter.
6. Help your children to build up a well-selected book and record collection in the language they are learning. The foreign language teacher and other librarians would be pleased to advise you.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Suggested Readings

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Some Language Films

In the National Interest: Part I; Part II. Each a 30-minute color sound film. Produced by the National Educational Television and Radio Center for the Office of Education under NDEA, title VI. Available on loan from State foreign language supervisors. Part I covers in general the work of State foreign language supervisors, NDEA language institutes, and other language activities in schools and colleges. Part II covers research and training programs in the languages not commonly offered in U.S. schools.

The Nature of Language and How It Is Learned; The Sounds of Language; The Organization of Language; Words and Their Meanings; Modern Techniques in Language Teaching; Principles and Methods of Teaching a Second Language Series. Each a 30-minute black and white sound film. Produced by Teaching Film Custodians for the Center for Applied Linguistics with the support of the Modern Language Association. Film rental information available from some State departments of education, from several college and university film libraries or from the Film Library of the American Museum of Natural History, 77th Street and Central Park West, New York, N.Y.

Each program consists of general lectures on the principles of linguistics as applied to the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

To Speak With Friends. 30-minute black and white sound film. Produced by the National Educational Television and Radio Center for the Office of Education under NDEA, title VI. Available on loan from State foreign language supervisors of education.

Illustrates the use of new audio visual aids in language laboratories, films and activities in language teaching.

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